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smut upon the grain,) to appear in the future growth of general instruction: but the aim ought to be, that children of the same school may ever after love each other, as *belonging* to the same country, early united in what the great Bacon calls, "that copulate and *conjoined* custom, more powerful than *single* custom, where example teacheth, company comforteth, emulation quickeneth, and glory raiseth."

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

THE name of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq., in the Republic of Letters, is now become so formidable, as to deter a puny Essayist like myself from offering to the public any thing in the smallest degree savouring of opposition to so great an authority. Nor should I have had the temerity to come forward on the present occasion, had I not the firmest conviction on my own mind, that Mr. Edgeworth's Letter to the Primate, on the subject of National Education, is very exceptionable, both in principle and in detail. With great deference to Mr. Edgeworth, I shall endeavour to show where I think his plan is defective, and also that he does not take that extensive view of the subject, of which it admits and requires.

As to the policy or impolicy of giving education to the poor, I am decidedly of the same opinion with Mr. Edgeworth, for well convinced I am, that it is no less for the interest of the rich, and the middle ranks of society, than for the advantage of the poor, that they should be instructed, and that, by giving them education, they are not only made wiser men, but also that by instruction they are made better members of society. I shall, therefore neither waste your time nor my

own, in endeavouring to settle a point which I believe requires no argument with any person, but such as will not be convinced; and waste of time it must be, to attempt to prevail on such persons to acknowledge their conviction.

With respect to teaching arithmetic to the poor, I also agree with Mr. Edgeworth, being fully of opinion, that it is a very essential part of education, and not to be considered of less importance than either reading or writing. At the same time, I must say, that I am by no means friendly to Mr. Edgeworth's mode of expressing himself on that part of the subject.

In my mind, it is unbecoming the gentleman and the philosopher, to throw out sarcasms upon the religion of any sect of Christians, nor is it consistent with, or an adjunct to, fair and impartial reasoning. It appears to be a part of Mr. Edgeworth's plan, to endeavour to conciliate the minds of Roman Catholics towards a system of National Education: how far the insinuation, that "the people should not be taught to think is a truly Popish principle," will go towards effecting that very desirable purpose, may be left to Mr. Edgeworth to judge; but if Catholics have feelings like other men, of which I believe there can be no doubt, such expressions will not be considered as very conciliatory. Mr. Edgeworth acknowledges, that such a principle is disavowed by every liberal Catholic, if this admission was by way of qualifying the harshness of the expression, which it would appear to be, it would have been much better to have blotted it out altogether, than to have exposed himself to censure for an illiberal expression, which could neither strengthen his argument, nor elucidate his subject. It were devoutly to be wished, that such reflect

tions upon the religion of others, either directly or by implication, should be avoided by Protestant writers: it is often injurious, and never can be advantageous to the cause they may advocate: it must be grating to the feelings of those who are the objects of them, and can only exasperate, instead of convincing them. The objectionable phrase used by Mr. Edgeworth, was also particularly inapplicable to the case in hand, as the observation, that the poor should not be taught arithmetic, did not come from any Catholic clergyman, but from a Protestant divine. It is not a principle avowed by Catholics, but by the friends and adherents of a Reverend Doctor of the Protestant church: nor can it be termed a truly Catholic or Popish principle, unless Mr. Edgeworth is prepared to show us, that arithmetic is greatly discouraged or disapproved of in Catholic countries, which would be rather difficult for him to prove.

Mr. Edgeworth now comes "to examine whether the difference of religious creeds, and the animosities of party prejudice, can be so far reconciled, as to permit the adoption of any general system for the instruction of the people;" he says, "that it is not intended that Protestant masters shall interfere with the religious instruction of Catholic children." So far this is extremely well, and provided the principle is strictly and uniformly adhered to, there will be no kind of necessity for that "line of demarkation" being drawn between the children of the different professions, which would be the consequence of Protestant masters being appointed for Protestant children, and Catholic masters for Catholic children; a line of distinction which though however lightly it may be thought of by Mr. Edgeworth, would, in my mind, be productive of very serious evils: evils which, unfortu-

nately for our country, have been too well known to be the greatest to which it has been subject for centuries past.

To separate the children into parties, and to appoint teachers for each, does not appear to me in the unimportant light in which it appears to strike Mr. Edgeworth. The very act of separation would in itself induce an inquiry into its cause, by the young ones, and being told they were kept asunder because they were of different religions, in all likelihood would be productive of invidious comparisons and jealousies among them, which would never arise, were they to be taught together in one apartment, and by one master. The distinction might also be the means of producing a rivalry between the teachers, and if any ill blood were to arise between them, religion, in all probability, would be called in as an auxiliary in the quarrel, and all the dire effects of disunion and intolerance be the consequence. Mr. Edgeworth says he knows but of one way practicable to avoid the difficulty. Now I think I know another way, much more effectual, and to the full as practicable. A way which I am well persuaded would level all distinctions between the different sectaries, obliterate every bigoted or intolerant feeling, and produce as much harmony and brotherhood of affection among the professors of different religious tenets, as if they were all of one faith: and all this by merely having the children taught all in one apartment, and all by the same teacher, allowing that the master should make no preference on account of religion, but to hold an even and steady hand over the children, making no distinction for any thing but for good conduct and proficiency in learning: let the schools be established openly and avowedly for the benefit of all religious sects.

without distinction; let no creeds, catechisms, or books of religious controversy, be used in the school, as school-books, and let those portions of the Holy Scriptures which are read in the schools, be entirely clear of controverted points; and above all, the teachers should be select, judicious, and liberal minded men, who are willing to do their duty, without favour or affection to any sect or party. If, upon these principles, the schools are established, wherever a teacher of the above description can be found, it will be very unimportant indeed, what may be his religious faith, whether he be a Catholic or a Presbyterian, a Protestant or a Quaker. Mr. Edgeworth has said, that "there are places in Ireland, where every attempt of the most enlightened people has failed to collect the children of Catholics under a Protestant master;" this I think highly probable, but the reason is obvious, sufficient care was not taken to convince the parents, that proselytism was not the object, and they being tenacious of their religious faith, were afraid to trust their children, when attempts might be made to seduce them from the religion of their parents. The manner in which almost all schools have been hitherto erected, for the instruction of Catholics, has given them just ground for jealousy: in place of being schools for teaching them to read and write, they have been rather like conventicles established for the purpose of converting them to the Protestant faith; Protestant school-masters, Protestant creeds and catechisms, Protestant versions of the Bible, Protestant visitors and inspectors, often chosen from among the clergy of that church. No wonder, therefore, that Catholics have been cautious of sending their children to such seminaries. They have been so much accustomed to hear of such

schools being established for purposes of proselytism, that something uncommonly decided must be done, to convince them, that the instruction, and not the conversion of their children, is the object in view. It is on this account, that I would totally disagree with Mr. Edgeworth, in putting the national schools under the direction of the clergy of either sects. The Protestant clergy should have nothing to do with the schools, that the Catholics may not be apprehensive of them making proselytes of their children, and the Catholic clergy should stand as clear of the schools, for the purpose of quieting the fears of Protestants on the same head.

It is by no means essential to the prosperity of schools, that the clergy should be concerned with them: many excellent schools and academies are successfully conducted, where they are not the most remotely concerned. Why then hesitate a moment to put the national schools under the direction of liberal-minded and intelligent laymen? The time was, when the literature of the country was almost exclusively in the possession of the clergy; but thanks to Heaven such times are past and gone: better days are come in their place, and an intelligent, well-informed laity have arisen, who are fully as capable as the clergy of managing schools and other establishments useful to the public.

Mr. Edgeworth acknowledges that it is the opinion of many, that "it is unsafe for Catholic Bishops, or Catholic Clergy, to have any share in the superintendence of schools; and that the clergy of the establishment would consider themselves as degraded by acting along with them." Now with this fact before his eyes, how can he consistently recommend, that the clergy of the two churches should be associated in such an important

business, where unanimity and mutual confidence are so vital to the interests, and so essential to the prosperity of the institution. Does Mr. Edgeworth not consider, that by an attempt at amalgamating materials so heterogeneous, he might put to imminent risk the very existence of those infant institutions? Were the world involved in that ignorance and Cimmerian darkness, which is alluded to above, when none but the clergy knew any thing of letters, then it might be necessary to put the management of schools into their hands; but in the present age, when the clergy are far from being the most enlightened men in society, and when there are enough of well-instructed and benevolent laymen willing and able to undertake the task, why run any such risk? When the clergy discover liberality of sentiment towards each other, and preach toleration and liberty of conscience: when they show proofs that they are ready to join heart and hand with each other, though of different religious creeds, in promoting any establishments useful to society; and that the education of the poor is really a serious object of their wishes, it is then full time enough to entrust them with the management of such an important concern, but not till then.

Let the schools be put under the management of liberal-minded, intelligent laymen, men who are known to their neighbours, and possess their confidence; whether Catholics or Protestants, make no distinction: do not allow the patronage of a school to be a monopoly in the hands of any one man, however elevated in rank, or distinguished by situation. Let the master be examined by a committee appointed for the purpose, and allow his appointment to be vested in a committee of managers, and not in any one individual.

There is no neighbourhood where such a school is necessary, but a sufficient number of well-disposed, liberal-minded persons may be found for such a purpose. Let such men have the management of the schools, and they will prosper; but put them into the hands of the clergy of either sects, and the jealousies so much apprehended will be created. Allow both parties to be concerned, and the disagreements respecting rank, and the difference of religious sentiments, will immediately break out, and the parties pulling different ways, will soon bring destruction on the institution.

Mr. Edgeworth appears apprehensive that Catholic masters might be addicted to teach the children of Protestants what they might consider salutary truths. Now I would much more readily become security for the school-master, in that respect, than I would for the clergy of either sects; and I would have full as much confidence in the Catholic masters, as I would in the Protestant. In the first case it is considered by the clergy a kind of duty incumbent on them, to make proselytes to their religion; and many think it their interest. Now were the school-master peremptorily told, that he must not by any means, interfere with the religion of the children, on pain of forfeiting his situation, he would not dare to transgress against such an order, his bread depending on it. Not so the clergy: they, in place of being in the situation of the person receiving the order, would be those who had choice whether to give it or not, and to them no responsibility would attach, nor could any penalty be held over them in terrorem: for if they did not even succeed in their attempts at proselytism, they could lose nothing by it, as they could not be deprived of their livings. When the teachers of either sect would once

find that the system of proselytism was to them interdicted, and that their livelihood depended on their neutrality on that head, they would be extremely cautious indeed, at making any attempt of converting the children to their own faith. But it would be very difficult for the clergy of any sect to hold such neutrality, when they had nothing at risk; a predilection for their own religious tenets would be often creeping out, and exhibiting itself, where the disunion produced by it might be highly prejudicial to the well-being of the institution.

Mr. Edgeworth says, "there are many places in Ireland where Protestant and Catholic children are taught to read, and write, and say their respective catechisms by Catholic masters." No doubt but there are such schools, and that the children are very well taught at them; but it is only at pay schools that catechisms would be allowed by Catholic parents. With persons of their own persuasion they would have no fear of their children being seduced by the catechism of other sects. But this will not apply to free-schools, where Protestant catechisms are introduced: for all free-schools on Protestant foundation, having hitherto, among Catholics, had the character of being as much for the purpose of Protestantising the children, as for teaching them to read and write, if catechisms are not entirely laid aside, and every other method taken to convince them that proselytism is not the object, they will stand aloof from such schools, and refuse to send their children to them.

Mr. Edgeworth recommends 40 preparatory schools in each county, or in the nation about 1300 schools; at those schools he proposes having from 40 to 80 children taught by one master, who should receive from

the government a part of his salary, and the remainder to be paid by the parents of the children to the amount of from 40 to £.60 per annum. Now on the old system of education, 40 children are too many for one man to manage, so as to do justice to the whole: as no man can fairly and properly attend to more than 30 children, teaching them to read, write, and account. Many schoolmasters have the largest number mentioned by Mr. Edgeworth to attend to; but it is well known that it is not possible to do justice to such a number, by one individual. But even supposing that the average number mentioned by Mr. Edgeworth should be put under the care of 1300 teachers, the whole number would not exceed 78,000 children, who by this means would be instructed: a number far short of the children in Ireland who require education.

From an inquiry instituted by Gervas Parker Bushe, Esq. one of the commissioners of the revenue, in 1791, the number of houses in Ireland amounted to 701,102, and in 1788, the hearth-money collectors in several counties, took an account of the population, and the total number of souls contained in 14,108 houses, taken indiscriminately, was found to be 87,895, or about $6\frac{1}{4}$ to each house, which would make the population of the country at that period amount to at least 4,500,000. Now allowing that in 22 years the number had increased 500,000, a moderate computation, the population of the country would now amount to 5,000,000: taking the families to consist of 6 each, the number of families would amount to 833,333; but supposing that one half of those could pay for education, 416,666 families would then be left, who would require assistance in educating their children: taking two-

thirds of that number for the parents, and the children not ready for school, there would still remain 277,777 children who required education. What would Mr. Edgeworth's 1300 schools at 60 each do for this number? The answer is obvious,—very little.

Finding the principles upon which Mr. Edgeworth would found his plan of national education in so many points defective, it is but natural to expect that another plan, and other principles should be suggested. I shall therefore endeavour to explain the principles on which I would advise such a system to be founded.

Let the legislature vest in the hands of commissioners, a certain sum of money, for the purpose of building school-houses throughout the Kingdom. Let the inhabitants of the different parishes be empowered to choose from among themselves, committees of instruction, in whom to vest the trusteeships of the schools for the education of the poor. Let populous parishes have one or more schools, according to the number of children to be educated therein; but where the population of two adjoining parishes is but thin, or where a populous parish may join one which is scarce of inhabitants, let one school answer for both; but let the committee be chosen by a joint meeting of the inhabitants of both parishes, composed of all the inhabitants who are subject to county or church cess; this committee may consist of eleven members, to be chosen by ballot, without distinction of religious faith. Let this committee make out an estimate of all the children in the parish, from six years old up, those who are able to pay for education, and those who are not; and according to the number who are enabled to pay, allow the committee to levy a sum off the parish, or parishes in proportion to

the number of children belonging to the respective parishes, at vestry meetings, for the support of the school; allowing the parents of children who are able to pay, to contribute a fair sum, according to the judgment of the committee, for the education of their children, and the remainder to be levied off the parish; and when persons who are able to pay for education decline sending their children to the public school which may be the case in some districts, the whole expence of the charity-school must be provided for by the parish.

Let this committee have the sole management of the school, appointment of the teacher, and adjudging of the sum to be levied off the parish; but that they may, as much as possible, possess the confidence of the parish, let 7 of the 11 retire every year, unless they are re-elected: the object of retaining four must be obvious, namely, that so many who understand the routine business of the school, should always continue in office, lest at any time inconvenience should arise by having an entire new committee.

School houses should be built in such situations as may best accommodate the population of the district in which it may be built, the site of which should be decided on by a general meeting of the inhabitants, as before described, of the district in which it is to be built.

Let one general plan of school-houses be fixed on, and have them erected according to the population or extent of the districts where they are built. I have seen lately some school-houses, on which large sums of money have been laid out, which are extremely inconvenient, and do not by any means well answer the purpose; this has arisen by builders being consulted merely as architects, and having no knowledge of

the principles on which a school-house ought to be built; the most convenient plan, therefore, should be sought for, and when found, every house should be built in conformity with it. Let the Committee have a drawing made of the plan, and make publication for receiving estimates for building the same; which, when they have agreed on, let them forward the plan and estimate to the Commissioners, who shall certify to the Committee their consent to advance the necessary sum, in the following manner:—When one half the money is certified by the Committee to have been expended, one fourth part of the money to be paid by the Commissioners; when three-fourths of the money are expended, another fourth to be advanced; and when the building is finished, and inspected by two respectable architects, who shall, on oath, certify the same to be finished in a substantial, sufficient, and workman-like manner, the other half shall be paid; the inspectors to be nominated by the Commissioners. Let those schools be opened and conducted on the Lancasterian plan, as now known and experienced to be the most economical, with respect to teachers, and the necessary articles of a school, such as books, paper, ink, and quills; and also with respect to the time of the children, as it is now past controversy, that one man may do as much on that plan, as ten on the old plan, and that he will push forward, in reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, (as far as division,) 500 children, as soon as he will 50 on the old plan.

By opening 1300 Lancasterian schools, the number which can be taught therein would bear some proportion to the population of the country; for supposing they, on an average, should only contain 200 scholars each, 260,000 children might

be receiving education every day, which comes much nearer the point than the 78,000 proposed by Mr. Edgeworth.

When we take into consideration, that this vast number of children can be taught by the same number of masters that Mr. Edgeworth has proposed for 78,000, and that they will not, on an average, require a larger annual sum than his masters, who would only teach from 40 to 80 each; when the difference of the expense of books, &c. is also considered, I hope it requires no argument to prove, that my plan is as much superior to his, at least, as 277 is to 78.

I most sincerely wish, that Mr. Edgeworth would take the trouble of visiting a Lancasterian school, and with particular attention inspect it: let him examine with minuteness into the detail of it, and make inquiry into its principles. I have no doubt, but were to take that trouble, he would decide most peremptorily in its favour, as being by far the best adapted to the purposes of National Education, so far at least as preparatory schools. As to his idea of provincial schools, I have not yet turned my attention towards it, in general, for so far, I approve of the idea of holding out such an inducement as a spur to the industry and application of children at preparatory schools.

I think it must be evident, that parishes taxing themselves for such a purpose, is most congenial to the minds of the people at large; that the money raised by a parish tax must go much farther than what would come through the medium of the exchequer, and that it would be laid on more equally, as every parish would have to pay only what was expended on itself.

As to Mr. Edgeworth's idea of paying Commissioners, I would much

rather take chance of neglect by their not being paid, than run the risk of jobbing, by having salaries annexed to the office. If the Commissioners are not paid, you will get none to act who have not the object sincerely at heart; if they are paid, you may get the most worthless appointed, who care for no part of the office but the emoluments. I have no doubt, but there are plenty of philanthropists to be had, who would glory in undertaking the office, and with such men there need be no apprehension of neglect.

Having extended this essay to a length which I am afraid is inconvenient for your magazine, I have been obliged to conclude, without observing upon some other points of Mr. Edgeworth's Letter, but which, with your permission, I shall submit to the public on a future occasion.

I am your obedient servant,

DION.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

IMRESSED with the conviction, that every friend to freedom and his country, ought to contribute his literary mite towards the support of your independent publication, especially at the present time, when its subversion is attempted, for the unpardonable *crime* of speaking the *truth*, I send you the following thoughts on the absurd doctrine of the divine right of Kings, and of implicit obedience to the higher powers.

Lambeg.

M—D.

THERE are few men whose works have suffered more from erroneous and overstrained interpretations, than those of the Apostle Paul. Scarcely has he written a single line

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that has not been either misrepresented or misunderstood. But I am strongly inclined to think, that the cause of this has originated, rather in our want of candour, than in his obscurity. One time, we interpret his writings in a strictly literal sense; at another time, we have recourse to figurative interpretation. One time we adduce an insulated passage; another time, we heap together different passages from various parts, without bestowing on the context the least consideration. Thus we constantly bewilder ourselves and others, and make the Apostle our authority for extravagant opinions which he never entertained. And where is the author who may not be similarly misconstrued? Where is the light that may not be made darkness? I should not, perhaps, have troubled the public with my sentiments on this subject, but for the following circumstance. A person of some eminence in this part of the world, conversing a short time since with a clergyman of the established church, respecting the Epistles of St. Paul, the Reverend gentleman did not blush to defend the long exploded doctrine of the *divine* rights of Kings, and the necessity of yielding them an *absolute obedience!!* And, in support of his opinions, he cited the two first verses of the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation," (*condemnation* it should be rendered, *ἐαυτοῖς κρίμα λήψονται*). I had hoped, that this most tyrannical, and most irrational of all the paradoxes which have ever been advanced by the advocates of slavery, and the enemies of freedom, had ex-

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